



UNITED
NATIONS

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS SECTION

UNITED NATIONS NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS SURVEY

In March 1988, the DPI/NGO Executive Committee initiated a survey to determine how Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) felt about the information they received at Headquarters and how they evaluated the information programmes and materials offered to them by the United Nations and how, in turn, they utilized that material to further their own activities.

Of 850 questionnaires mailed, 543 NGOs responded. Of those, 78 respondents identified their organizations as educational, 53 as business or professional, 50 as development, 39 as women, 35 as religion, 32 as human rights and 31 as peace and security. Only two of the total respondents described themselves as media organizations.

Three hundred and thirty-one organizations stated they were internationally oriented, 169 were nationally and eight were regionally oriented. Thirty-seven per cent of all organizations noted their association with DPI, 37 per cent with ECOSOC and 18 per cent were associated with both DPI and ECOSOC. However, a significant number of respondents did not know whether they were associated with DPI or ECOSOC. When asked how many members belonged to their organization, 117 responded they had over 100,000 members. Twenty-four organizations' membership was between 50,000 and 100,000 people and 61 organizations had between 10,000 and 50,000 members. Ninety-nine organizations consisted of 1,000 to 10,000 people, 102 organizations of 100 to 1,000 members, and 66 organizations had less than 100 members.

The largest number of responding organizations, 32 per cent, covered more than one region in terms of organizational membership. Fifteen per cent of the organizations were located in North America, ten per cent in Western Europe and three per cent in Asia and the Pacific. Organizations from Latin America and Africa followed with 2.8 per cent while organizations from Eastern Europe and Western Asia consisted of less than one per cent of all respondents.

Economic and social development issues were regarded most important (74 per cent) by the NGOs with the United Nations and its work following directly behind with 72 per cent. Next came United Nations conferences and events (71 per cent), human rights (70 per cent), women (63 per cent), and international peace and security (60 per cent). Decolonization was regarded least important (three per cent) by the NGOs.

Asked what United Nations materials were useful to the organizations, 443 respondents found United Nations publications most useful. Three hundred and sixty-five respondents preferred DPI/NGO conferences, briefings and the summaries thereof and 358 respondents found the United Nations official documents to be useful. The Development Forum and the United Nations Chronicle followed with 335 and 313 respectively. Regarded as least useful (20 per cent) were radio tapes.

Most NGOs asked that their materials be sent in English (80 per cent). French followed with eight per cent and Spanish with three per cent. Russian and Chinese were languages least required in regards to United Nations materials.

Three hundred and four respondents rated United Nations materials quite useful as compared to 139 respondents who found them essential. Sixty-one organizations had little use and four had no use at all for United Nations materials. Among the responding organizations, 377 NGOs had a computer terminal (this was 1988) as compared to 141 who did not have a terminal. One hundred and twenty-nine organizations were interested in accessing United Nations databases as compared to 56 who were not interested.

The majority of the NGOs seemed to have availed themselves of materials at the United Nations NGO Resource Centre and the United Nations as a whole. Forty-seven per cent had used the Resource Centre and 59 per cent had representatives at United Nations Headquarters. Thirty-seven per cent had never used the Centre and 36 per cent did not have any representatives at United Nations Headquarters.

Half of the responding NGOs regarded their co-operation with the United Nations as very important, 33 per cent as essential, 13 per cent as not very important and 0.3 per cent as not at all important.

Finally, the country to which the most materials were disseminated was the United States with 202 organizations. Second followed Switzerland with 39 organizations, United Kingdom (37), France (31), Belgium (24) and Italy, Canada, Federal Republic of West Germany, Netherlands and Austria (between 16 and 12 organizations). There were 30 countries with only one organization to which United Nations materials had been disseminated, according to the result of the survey.

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